



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
(FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND COMPTROLLER)  
1000 NAVY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

APR 22 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (RESEARCH  
DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION)

Subj: Light Refreshments at Conferences

Encl: (1) Memorandum for Distribution dtd 18 April 2003

By decision dated 27 January 2003, the General Accounting Office ruled that the General Services Administration did not have authority to authorize agencies to use appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments at conferences, except as part of an employee's travel subsistence allowance for those in a travel status.

As a result of this decision I have issued the attached memorandum in order to clarify Navy policy on the subject. I am aware that this is a subject of great interest and potential misunderstanding throughout the Navy; it is therefore my desire that the attached memorandum receive the widest possible dissemination in both the financial management and acquisition communities. My staff point of contact for this issue is Mr. Louis P. Calabro Jr., FMB51, who can be reached at (703) 693-6586, or by email at calabro.louis@hq.navy.mil.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
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(FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND COMPTROLLER)  
1000 NAVY PENTAGON  
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APR 18 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

Subj: CLARIFICATION OF USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS TO PROCURE  
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

Ref: (a) CompGen Decision B-288266 of 27 Jan 03  
(b) OASN(FM&C) Memo 7150 FMB-56 of 31 May 00  
(c) JFTR U2550  
(d) JTR C4950  
(e) CompGen Decision B-223319 of 21 July 1986  
(f) SECNAV Memos of 8 Jan 02  
(g) OPNAVINST 5050.24F of 20 Jun 02  
(h) Marine Corps Order 7300.22

By reference (a), the Comptroller General (CompGen) published a decision on the use of appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments at conferences, which supercedes the guidance provided in references (b) through (d). The decision states that the General Services Administration (GSA) does not have the authority to authorize agencies to use appropriated funds to pay for an employee's food and light refreshments, except as part of the employee's travel subsistence allowance for those who are in a travel status. While serving light refreshments to conference attendees might be a common business practice in private industry, the expenditure of public funds must be anchored in existing law, not the practices and conventions of the private sector. Effective immediately, appropriated funds are not authorized to pay for light refreshments at conferences.

The GAO decision does not change the rules for the use of appropriated funds to pay for food under other authorities, such as those relating to training (5 USC 4109 for civilians and 10 USC 2013 for uniformed personnel) under the circumstances discussed in reference (a), and receptions for awards made under the provisions of 5 USC 4503, as discussed in reference (e). Activities should be diligent in ensuring the authorities are not misused, as improper use of appropriated funds could lead to a potential Antideficiency Act violation. Also, because the GSA's Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) forms the basis for the guidance contained in references (c) and (d), it is important to ensure activities under your cognizance are expeditiously informed of this change.

Encl (1)

Additionally, activities should ensure that DON conferences are officially approved consistent with the requirements delineated in references (f) through (h). Activities are reminded that, absent affirmative statutory authority, conference fees may not be collected and used to offset the cost of the conference or to reimburse or supplement the appropriation from which the conference is funded.

My point of contact is Mr. Louis P. Calabro, Jr., FMB-51 who can be reached on (703)693-6586, or by e-mail at calabro.louis@hq.navy.mil.

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